CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE HABITAT RELATIONSHIPS SYSTEM
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A061 Sequoia Slender Salamander Batrachoseps kawia
Family: Plethodontidae Order: Caudata Class: Amphibia

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Yearlong resident in the western slope of the southern Sierra Nevada, Tulare Co. Individuals occur along streams and in moist wooded canyons in valley foothill riparian habitats, blue oak woodlands, and Sierra mixed conifer woodlands (Yanev 1978). Brame and Murray (1968) included salamanders from four disjunct regions, including the southern Sierra Nevada, in B. pacificus. Jennings and Hayes (1994) elevated the animals from the southern Sierra Nevada to specific status (B. relictus). Then, on the basis of DNA analyses (Jockusch 1996, Jockusch et al. 1998), the B. relictus complex was split out into four distinct species -- B. relictus, B. regius, B. kawia and B. diabolicus. B. kawia is only known from the Kaweah river system in Tulare Co. (Stebbins 2003).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Feeding probably occurs both above and below ground (Hendrickson 1954). Stebbins (1951) reported that a similar species, the pacific slender salamander (B. pacficus), fed on earthworms, small slugs, a variety of terrestrial arthropods including sowbugs and millipedes, and insects including collembolans, aphids, caterpillars, small beetles, beetle larvae, and ants. The relictual slender salamander probably eats a similar array of prey items.

Cover: Members of the genus Batrachoseps do not usually excavate burrows. They rely on passages made by other animals, or produced by root decay or soil shrinkage (Yanev 1978). They are usually found under boards, rotting logs, rocks, and surface litter (Stebbins 1954).

Reproduction: Most reproductive activities probably occur underground (Yanev 1978). Eggs usually are laid in communal sites underground, but near, or under, a flat surface object (Stebbins 1954).

Water: Surface activity is limited to rainy winter months (Yanev 1978).

Pattern: Use relatively small, mesic areas (e.g., swales, drainages, etc.) with an overstory of trees or shrubs and abundant rocks, litter, or woody debris.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: The life history of the relictual slender salamander is virtually unknown (Jennings and Hayes 1994). Pacific slender salamanders are active underground from April or May until November or December. After the first winter rains, when moisture and temperature conditions are favorable, they increase surface activities (Stebbins 1954). They are normally active at night, and return to cover during daylight. During periods of extended rainfall, they may remain on the surface during

the day to feed (Hendrickson 1954). Surface activity is limited by extremes of temperature and unfavorable moisture conditions.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Highly sedentary; hatchlings presumably disperse, but no data found (Yanev 1978).

Home Range: No data for B. kawia, but they probably occupy a small home range. Hendrickson (1954) found that adults of B. attenuatus moved within a mean of 1.5 m (5 ft) from their home cover over 2 years, and 59% of the individuals were found repeatedly under the same cover.

Territory: No data.

Reproduction: No data for this species. B. pacificus lays eggs during late fall and winter; egg sets have been found from December 8 to January 18 (Stebbins 1954). The number of eggs per set ranged from 13 to 20. Hatchlings emerge during winter and early spring. It is not known if adults tend their young (Stebbins 1954).

Niche: The closely related B. pacificus is incapable of excavating its own burrows, except in loose soil and leaf litter (Stebbins 1954); thus, competition for cover sites may occur between individuals of the same species and other species with similar habitat requirements (Yanev 1978). Potential predators include spotted and striped skunks, raccoons, ringtails, gray foxes, ringneck snakes, and various skinks. moles, and shrews.

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